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ABSTRACT

At least four values, or families of values, should be taught in schools and families to respond to the increasingly multiracial and multicultural society of the United States. These are: (1) antiracism or opposition to racism; (2) multiculturalism; (3) a sense of community; and (4) treating persons as individuals. The first three categories are discussed in relation to education, focusing on education at the precollege level. Three components of antiracism include a belief in the equal worth of all persons regardless of race; an understanding of racism; and opposition, including intervention, to racism in others. Multiculturalism encompasses the subvalues of affirming one's own cultural identity, respecting and desiring to learn about and from other cultures, and valuing and delighting in cultural diversity itself. A sense of community suggests a sense that embraces racial and cultural differences, that involves a bond with others and a shared identity with the community. These values, or sets of values, are distinct from one another, and all are essential to a responsible program of value education in a multicultural society. (SLD)

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Antiracism, Multiculturalism, and Interracial Community: Three Educational Values for a Multicultural Society

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to Carol Ackley,
Best wishes,
Larry Blum

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Antiracism, Multiculturalism, and Interracial Community: Three Educational Values for a Multicultural Society

In the past year and a half or so multicultural education has garnered an extraordinary amount of media attention, most of it negative. My own involvement in this area predates the recent hoopla and has its source in my own children's working their way through the public schools of Cambridge, Massachusetts. I have been struck by how extraordinarily different their educational and social experience has been, and will continue to be, than was my own, attending almost all-white schools in the 1950's. Charges of so-called political correctness cannot mask the extraordinary demographic and social changes our society is undergoing that ground the need for a philosophy of education suited to an increasingly multiracial, multicultural society.

I approach that task from my own background in moral philosophy and the philosophy of value. I want to ask what values I would want my own and other children to be taught in schools, as well as in their families, to prepare them for life in the multicultural United States. I assume here that moral and value education must be a part of precollege education, and in doing so I ally myself with educators across a wide political spectrum.

My work in this area does not by and large focus on education at the college level, though I assume that *some* of what I have to say will have implications for colleges and their curricula. I also think it instructive for adults concerned with our current and future state of racial and ethnic relations to focus on younger children, where we sometimes get a glimpse of possibilities otherwise difficult to envision.

I want to argue that there are a *plurality* of values that one would want taught in schools and families. None of these can be reduced to the others, nor can any take the place of the others. Without claiming comprehensiveness for my list I want to suggest that there are at least four values, or families of values, essential to a program of value education for a multiracial society. I will describe all four values briefly and will then talk about each in more detail. (I recognize that the labels on these are somewhat arbitrary.)

I realize that multicultural education has its critics and detractors. I will not attempt today to defend or justify the four values but only to articulate them, so that it will be clearer what it is that needs defense and justification.

The first value is *antiracism* or *opposition to racism*:

> Racism is the denial of the fundamental moral equality of all human beings. It involves the expression of attitudes of superior worth or merit justifying or underpinning the domination or unjust advantage of some groups over others. Antiracism as a value involves striving to be without racist attitudes oneself as well as being prepared to work against both racist attitudes in others and racial injustice in society more generally.

The second value is *multiculturalism*:

> Multiculturalism involves an understanding, appreciation and valuing of one's own culture, and an informed respect and curiosity about the ethnic culture of others. It involves a valuing of other cultures, not in the sense of approving of all aspects of those cultures, but of attempting to see how a given culture can express value to its own members.

The third value is a sense of *community*, and in particular an *interracial community*:

> This involves a sense, not necessarily explicit or articulated, that one possesses human bonds with persons of other races and ethnicities. The bonds may, and ideally should, be so broad as to encompass all of humanity; but they may also be limited to the bonds formed in friendships, schools, workplaces, and the like.

The fourth value is *treating persons as individuals*:

> This involves recognizing the individuality of each person — specifically, that while an individual person is a member of an ethnic or racial group, and while that aspect may be an important part of who she is, she is more than that ethnic or racial identity. It is the lived appreciation of this individuality, not simply paying lip service to it, that constitutes the value I will call treating persons as individuals. (I will not have the opportunity to discuss this value further on this occasion.)

Again, I claim that these four are distinct though related values, and that all of them are essential to multicultural value education. Failure to appreciate their distinctness poses the danger that one of them will be neglected in a value education program. At the same time there are natural convergences and complementarities among the four values taken in any combination; there are ways of teaching each value that support the promotion of each one of the other values. On the other hand, I will claim, there can also be tensions, both practical and theoretical, between various of the values; that is, some ways of teaching one of the values may work against the conveying of one of the others. Since the values can be either convergent or in tension, it will be crucial to search for ways of teaching them that minimize the tension and support the convergences.

I have designated *antiracism* as the first value for this value education. In contrast to the three others, this one is stated negatively — in opposition to something rather than as a positive goal to be striven for. Why do I not refer to this value positively as "racial equality" or "racial justice"? One reason is that the oppositional definition brings out that a central aspect of the value of antiracism involves countering an evil and not just promoting a good. An important component of what children need to be taught is how to notice, to confront, to oppose, and to work toward the elimination of manifestations of racism. Particular moral abilities and traits of character, involving certain forms of empowerment, are required for activities of *opposition* that are not required merely for the promotion of a good goal. Of course, antiracism does presuppose the positive value of racial justice; hence, the positive element is implicitly contained in the value of antiracism.

To understand the value of antiracism we must first understand *racism*. The term racism, while a highly charged and condemnatory one, has no generally agreed upon meaning. On the one hand all can agree that using a racial slur, telling a Chicano student that one does not like Chicanos and wishes they were not in one's school, or carving "KKK" on the door of the African-American student's door, are racist acts. At the same time the conservative writer Dinesh D'Souza has given voice to a suspicion, shared I am sure by others, that the term "racism" is in danger of losing its meaning and moral force through a too broad usage.

I agree that there has sometimes been a tendency to inflate the meaning of the word racism so it becomes virtually a catchall term for any behavior concerning race or race relations that its user strongly condemns. This development ill serves those like myself who wish racism to be taken more seriously than it presently is. Like the boy who cried "wolf," the inflation of the concept of racism to encompass phenomena

with questionable connection to its core meaning desensitizes people to the danger, horror, and wrongfulness of true racism.

Here is my definition of racism, which I present without further defense: Racism refers both to an institutional or social structure of racial domination or injustice — as when we speak of a racist institution — and also to individual actions, beliefs, and attitudes, whether consciously held or not, which express, support or justify the superiority of one racial group to another. Thus, on both the individual levels, racism involves denying or violating the equal dignity and worth of all human beings independent of race; and, on both levels, racism is bound up with dominance and hierarchy.

Note that on my definition several practices or attitudes sometimes thought of as automatically racist are not (necessarily) racist, though they may involve racism in particular instances. One is *racial ignorance* or *insensitivity*, an example being a black high school student, who had what he thought were good white friends; but when Martin Luther King's birthday came around the white students did not understand why the black student cared about the celebration of King's birthday. This seems to be an example of racial ignorance or insensitivity, but not of racism. A second is *making racial distinctions*. We are all familiar with the view that merely to make a distinction between people on the basis of race is itself racist. A related example is when simply mentioning or noticing someone's race is seen as racist. A false model of non-racism as "color blindness" leads us to confuse making racial distinctions with racism itself. But unless making the racial distinction is grounded in an attribution of inferiority or lesser worth to one of the groups involved, racism (on my definition) is not present.

A third example is *racial exclusiveness* on the part of people of color, as when African-American or Hispanic students sit together in the school cafeteria. This too is not normally a racist practice, for it is not normally premised on an attitude of superiority toward nonblacks (or non-Hispanics), but may be simply a sense of comfort with those like oneself. A final example is *racial discomfort*, that is, a discomfort with people of other races; this too is not necessarily racist, though, of course, it can be.

Some of these practices or attitudes may be objectionable or regrettable without being racist. After all, ignorance and insensitivity are bad things. And racial exclusiveness can be detrimental to a sense of interracial community. But conflating them with racism makes it difficult to deal *either* with racism or with whatever *other* disvalue these practices may involve.

The point I am making here — and one I mean to emphasize in my work on multiculturalism — is that there are a *plurality* of values needed

in a multicultural society, and, conversely, a plurality of things that can go wrong in multicultural and multiracial interaction.

There are three components of (the value of) *antiracism* as I see it.

One is the belief in the equal worth of all persons regardless of race, not just as an intellectual matter, but rooted more deeply in one's attitudes and emotions; this is to have what one might call a *nonracist* moral consciousness. But it is not enough to learn to be nonracist as an individual; students must also be taught to *understand* the particularity of racism as a psychological and historical phenomenon. This is partly because one aspect of antiracism is learning to perceive racism and to recognize when it is occurring. Just being nonracist cannot guarantee this. For one may sincerely subscribe to the right principles of racial justice and yet not see particular instances of racism right under one's nose, in either institutional or individual forms; for example, not recognizing unintended patterns of exclusion of people of color, or not recognizing a racial stereotype.

There are three components to this second feature of antiracism (understanding racism). The first is the *psychological* dynamic of racism, such as scapegoating and stereotyping, rigidity and fear of difference, rationalization of privilege and power, projecting of unwanted wishes onto others, and other psychological processes contributing to racist attitudes. The second is the *historical* dynamic of racism in its particular forms: slavery, colonialism, segregation, Nazism, the mistreatment of native Americans, and the like. Involved also must be learning about movements *against* racism, such as abolitionism, civil rights movements, and the black power movement; and learning about institutional racism as well. The third component is the role of *individuals* in sustaining or resisting racist institutions, patterns, and systems — how individuals can change racist structures; how they may contribute to or help to perpetuate racist patterns even if they themselves are not actually racist.

Studying the historical dynamics of racism necessarily involves teaching the victimization of some groups by others. While some conservative critics of multicultural education ridicule and derogate focusing on a group's history as victims of racism, it would nevertheless be intellectually irresponsible not to do so. One can hardly understand the historical experience of African-Americans without slavery, of Jews without the Holocaust, of Asian-Americans without the historic barriers to citizenship and to family life and without the World-War-II internment camps.

Nevertheless, from the point of view of historical accuracy as well as that of value education, it is vital not to *confine* the presentation of a group to its status as victim. One needs to see subordinate groups as agents in their own history — not just as suffering victimization but as responding

to it, sometimes by active resistance both cultural and political, sometimes by passive resistance, sometimes by accommodation. The study of social history is invaluable here in providing the framework for seeing that victims made their own history in the face of their victimization, and for giving concrete embodiment to the philosophical truth that human beings retain the capacity for agency even when oppressed and dominated by others.

The third component of antiracist education (in addition to nonracism and understanding racism) is *opposition to racism*; for nonracism implies only that one does all one can to avoid racism in *one's own* actions and attitudes. This is insufficient, for students need also to develop a sense of responsibility concerning manifestations of racism in other persons and in the society more generally. For example, since students will almost inevitably witness racist acts, to confine their own responsibility simply to ensuring that they individually do not participate in such actions themselves is to give students a mixed message about how seriously they are being asked to take racism.

A teacher in my children's school elicited from her class occasions on which they had witnessed racist remarks. Two examples were of store clerks, one of whom said, "You Puerto Ricans are always stealing things; get out of my store," and the other, "Don't be a dirty Jew — give him the money." As this teacher did, truly antiracist education should help pupils think through what they themselves might do in such situations, how to assess the gains and risks of various courses of action. Discussions of this sort might help secure two goals. The first is that by encouraging students to bring up incidents of racism and by discussing them seriously, the teacher conveys to the class that racism is serious business, and is everyone's responsibility. The second is that such conversations help to develop students' own skills, abilities, and sense of competence in the complex tasks of active engagement with a society and world far from embodying ideals of racial justice.

Let me now examine antiracist education in the context of "citizenship" education, currently being touted across a broad political spectrum as an important component of secondary school education. A very useful text here is the *California History/Social Science Framework*, officially adopted by the state of California as a guideline for the writing and the adoption of textbooks for secondary schools.[1] (Some textbooks have now been adopted that conform to this framework.) This is an intellectually and pedagogically impressive document, written by a variety of educators and scholars, including Diane Ravitch, an influential educational historian and theorist, and currently an Assistant U.S. Education Secretary.

The *History/Social Science Framework* sees the development of the commitments and skills of active citizenship — a citizenship whose purpose is to sustain and protect democratic institutions — as a central task of secondary school education. The *Framework* also takes up racial issues much more fully than, say, the education that I received in the 1950's. Yet there is very little recognition in the *Framework* that the responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society should include antiracist commitments. To give just one illustration, the *Framework* speaks of learning to respect the rights of the minority, even a minority of one. But how about learning when to *be* such a minority of one, oneself? When should one be the person to speak out, to call attention to an injustice that others prefer not to think about?

James Baldwin in his book *The Fire Next Time* powerfully describes an incident from the early sixties in his own life that exemplifies such a failure of citizenship in the area of race.[2]

> A civilization is not destroyed by wicked people; it is not necessary that people be wicked but only that they be spineless. I and two Negro acquaintances, all of us well past thirty, and looking it, were in the bar in Chicago's O'Hare airport several months ago, and the bartender refused to serve us, because, he said, we looked too young. It took a vast amount of patience not to strangle him and great insistence and some luck to get the manager, who defended the bartender, on the ground that he was "new" and had not yet, presumably, learned how to distinguish a Negro "boy" of twenty and a Negro "boy" of thirty-seven. Well, we were served, finally, of course, but by this time no amount of Scotch would have helped us. The bar was very crowded and our altercation had been very noisy, yet not one customer in the bar had done anything to help us. (77 f.)

One goal of citizenship education should surely be for people to come to believe that they ought to intervene in some way in such situations, and to come away from their education with some guidelines about how to do so. On this, antiracist, feature of citizen education the *California History/Social Science Framework* is almost entirely silent.

The *Framework*'s failure here has two interconnected aspects. First, its conception of the forms of activity appropriate to a citizenry committed to upholding justice (as a feature of a democratic society) is too limited. It largely omits citizens' responsibility to *counter injustices* in their society.

The second failure is the inadequate attention to racism as a *primary instance* of the sort of injustice that a future democratic citizenry needs to be educated to understand and to counteract.

The second educational value, *multiculturalism*, encompasses the following three subvalues: (a) affirming one's own cultural identity; learning about and valuing one's own cultural heritage; (b) respecting and desiring to understand and learn about (and from) cultures other than one's own; (c) valuing and taking delight in cultural diversity itself; that is, regarding the existence of distinct cultural groups within one's own society as a positive good to be treasured and nurtured. The kind of respect involved in the second condition (respecting others) is meant to be an informed (and not uncritical) respect grounded in an understanding of another culture. It involves an attempt to see the culture from the point of view of its members and in particular to see how members of that culture value the expression of their own culture. It involves an active interest in and ability in some way to enter into and to enjoy the cultural expressions of other groups.

Such an understanding of another culture in no way requires an affirmation of every feature of that culture as positively good, as some critics of multiculturalism fear (or at least charge). It does not preclude criticism, on the basis either of norms of that culture itself which particular practices in that culture might violate, or of standards external to that culture. Of course when it is legitimate to use a standard external to a culture (e.g. a particular standard of equality between men and women drawn from the Western liberal tradition) is a complex issue. And multiculturalism always warns both against using a legitimate criticism of some feature of a culture as moral leverage to condemn the culture as a whole — declaring it not worthy of serious curricular attention, or disqualifying it as a source of moral insight to those outside that culture, for example — as well as alerting us to the difficult-to-avoid failure to scrutinize the basis of that criticism for its own cultural bias. Nevertheless, multiculturalism need not and should not identify itself with the view that members of one culture never have the moral standing to make an informed criticism of the practices of another culture.

The outward directedness of the second feature of multiculturalism (respecting other cultures) is an important complement to the inward focus of the first feature (learning about and valuing one's own culture). This dual orientation meets the criticism sometimes made of multiculturalism that it creates divisions between students. For the second feature prescribes a reaching out beyond one's own group and thus explicitly counters the balkanizing effect of the first dimension of

multiculturalism alone. Nevertheless, that first feature — learning about and valuing one's own culture — is an integral part of multiculturalism, not merely something to be tolerated, treated as a response to political pressure, or justified simply on the grounds of boosting self-esteem. An individual's cultural identity is a deeply significant element of herself, and understanding of her own culture should be a vital part of the task of education. An understanding of one's own culture as contributing to the society of which one is a part is a significant part of that first element of multiculturalism.

The third component of multiculturalism is the valuing of diversity itself. Not only do we want our young people to respect specific other cultures but also to value a school, a city, a society in which diverse cultural groups exist. While this diversity may certainly present problems for young people, one wants them to see the diversity primarily as something to value, prefer, and cherish.

Three dimensions of culture seem to be deserving of curricular and other forms of educational attention in schools. The first is the *ancestor culture* of the ethnic group, nation, or civilization of origin. For Chinese-Americans this would involve understanding Chinese culture, including ancient Chinese cultures, philosophies, religions, and the like. For Irish-Americans it would be Irish history and culture. For Mexican-Americans it would include attention to some of the diverse cultures of Mexico — the Aztec, the Mayan, as well as the Spanish, and then the hybrid Spanish/indigenous culture which forms modern Mexican culture.

While all ethnic cultures have an ancestor culture, not all current groups bear the same relationship to that ancestor culture. For example, African-Americans' connection to their ancestor culture is importantly different from that of immigrant groups like Italians, Eastern European Jews, and Irish. Although scholars disagree about the actual extent of influence of various African cultures on current African-American cultural forms, it was a general feature of American slavery systematically to attempt to deprive African slaves of their African culture. By contrast voluntary immigrant groups brought with them an intact culture, which they renegotiated in the new conditions of the United States. In fact the label "African-American" can be seen as an attempt to forge a stronger analogy between the experience of black Americans and that of other immigrant groups than do other expressions, such as "black" or even "Afro-American." The former conceptualization emphasizes that American blacks are not simply a product of America but do indeed possess an ancestor culture, no matter how brutally that culture was attacked. Note, however, that there is an important difference between this use of "African-American" and that applied, for example, to second-genera-

tion Ethiopian-Americans. The latter is a truer parallel to white ethnic "hyphenate Americans."

Other differences among groups, such as the current ethnic group's distance in time from its original emigration, variations and pressures to assimilate once in the United States, and the effects of racism affect the significance of the ancestor culture for a current ethnic group. Nevertheless ancestor culture plays some role for every group.

A second dimension of culture to be encompassed by multicultural education is the *historical experience* of the ethnic group within the United States. Generally it will attend to the historical experiences, ways of life, triumphs and setbacks, art and literature, contributions and achievements, of ethnic groups in the United States. The latter point is uncontroversial; all proponents of multicultural education agree in the need to correct the omission in traditional curricula and text books of many ethnic groups' experiences and contributions to our national life. But distinguishing this dimension from the ancestor culture and giving attention to both of them is crucial. For the culture of the Chinese-American is *not* the same as the culture of traditional or modern China; it is a culture with its own integrity: neither the purer form of ancestor culture nor that of middle-America. It can be called "intercultural," influenced by more than one culture (as indeed the ancestor culture itself may have been), yet forming a culture in its own right.

A third dimension of culture is the *current ethnic culture* of the group in question. This is the dimension most directly embodied in the student member of that culture. This current ethnic culture — family ethnic rituals, foods, customs regarding family roles and interactions, values, musical and other cultural preferences, philosophies of life, and the like — bears complex relationships to the ancestor culture as well as to the group's historical ethnic experience in the United States. It changes over time and is affected in myriad ways by the outer society. As with ancestor culture and historical ethnic experience, the student's current ethnic culture must be given respect. What such respect consists in is a complex matter, as the following examples indicate.

In one case respect can involve allowing Arab girls to wear traditional headgear in school if they so desire. In another it can mean seeing a child's remark in class as containing an insight stemming from her cultural perspective that might otherwise be missed or seem off the mark. Another form of respect for culture involves, for example, recognizing that a Vietnamese child's failure to look a teacher in the eye is not a sign of evasiveness or lack of interest but a way of expressing a deference to teachers and authority, culturally regarded as appropriate. Thus, respect for ethnic cultures sometimes involves a direct valorizing of a part of that

culture; at other times neither valorizing nor disvaluing, but allowing for its expression because it is important to the student. In another context, it can involve reshaping one's own sense of what is educationally essential, to take into account another culture's difference. Finally, it can sometimes involve seeing a cultural manifestation as a genuine obstacle to learning but respecting the cultural setting in which it is embedded and the student's own attachment to that cultural feature, and finding ways to work with or around that obstacle to accomplish an educational goal.

In summary, ancestor culture, ethnic historical experience in the United States, and current ethnic culture are three dimensions of ethnic culture requiring attention in a muticultural education. They are all dimensions that children need to be taught and taught to respect — both in their own and other's cultures.

The context of multicultural education presupposes a larger society consisting of various cultures. Thus, teaching an attitude of appreciation toward a particular one of these cultures in the three dimensions just mentioned will have both a particular and a general aspect. We will want students to appreciate cultures in their own right, but also in their relationship to the larger society. This simple point can help us to avoid two familiar, and contrasting, pitfalls of multicultural education, that can be illustrated with the example of Martin Luther King, Jr.

One pitfall would be exemplified by a teacher who portrayed King as an important leader of the black community, but who failed to emphasize that he should be seen as a great *American* leader more generally — as a true hero for all Americans, indeed, for all humanity, and not *only* for or of African-Americans. The teacher fails to show the non-African-American students that they too have a connection with King simply as Americans.

Yet an exactly opposite pitfall is to teach appreciation of the contribution of members of particular cultures *only* insofar as those contributions can be seen in universal terms or in terms of benefiting the entire society. This pitfall would be exemplified by seeing Dr. King only in terms of his contribution to humanity or to American society more generally, but *not* acknowledging him as a product and leader specifically of the African-American community. Multicultural education needs to enable non-African-American students (whether white or not) to be able to appreciate a leader of the African-American community in that role itself, and not *only* by showing that the leader in question made a contribution to everyone in the society. Thus, multicultural education needs to emphasize both the general or full society dimension of each culture's contributions and heroes and also the particular or culture-specific dimension.

Many people associate multiculturalism with the idea of moral *relativism* or cultural relativism and specifically with the view that because no one from one culture is in a position to judge another culture, no one is in a position to say which culture should be given priority in the allocation of respect, curricular inclusion, and the like. Therefore, according to this way of thinking, every culture has a claim to equal inclusion and respect, because no one is in a position to say which ones are *more* worthy of respect. While the philosophic relativism on which this version of multiculturalism rests needs to be taken seriously — it has a long and distinguished philosophic history — there is an alternative, quite different and nonrelativistic, philosophic foundation for multiculturalism as well. This view — which might be called *pluralistic* — agrees that cultures manifest different values but affirms that the values of a given culture can be, or can come to be, appreciated (as well as assessed) by someone from a different culture. Thus, while cultures are different, they are at least partly accessible to one another.

According to this pluralist, nonrelativist line of thought, multicultural education should involve exposing students to, and helping them to appreciate the range of, values embodied in different cultures. Both whites and Cambodian immigrant students can come to appreciate Toni Morrison's novels of black life in America. African-American students can come to understand and appreciate Confucian philosophy. This pluralist view should not minimize the work often necessary to see beyond the parochial assumptions and perspectives of one's own culture in order to appreciate the values of another culture. Indeed, one of the undoubted contributions of the multicultural movement has been to reveal those obstacles as well as the dominant culture's resistance to acknowledging them. Nevertheless, the fact that such an effort can be even partially successful provides a goal of multicultural education that is barely conceivable within the pure relativist position.

I want now to explore the complex relationship between the two values that I have discussed so far — antiracism and multiculturalism. First, to establish the differences: Both multiculturalism and antiracism are concerned with groups and group identities; but the groups are constituted differently from an antiracist than from a multicultural standpoint. From an antiracist standpoint a group is constituted by its place in the hierarchy of racial dominance (roughly, by whether it is a dominant group or a subordinate group). Thus, in the United States whites, as a racial group, are dominant, while African-Americans, Native-Americans, and Latinos or Hispanics are subordinate. But from a multicultural perspective African-Americans, Latinos, and Native-Ameri-

cans are not single cultural groups. Mexicans are culturally very different from Puerto Ricans though both are Latino. Black Americans wnose roots in this country go back to slavery are culturally distinct from much more recent immigrants, for example, from Haiti, whose native language is Haitian Creole, as well as from English-speaking blacks from other Caribbean countries. Haitians have a heritage as citizens of the first black republic in the New World and the only one set up as a result of a successful slave revolt. This gives Haitians a very different sense of the significance of their race and racial history than that of United States slave descendants. Elaine Pinderhughes, an African-American professor of social work and the author of *Understanding Race, Ethnicity, and Power*, quotes a Haitian-American whose racial and ethnic identity illustrates this: "As a child I never understood why my father insisted on identifying himself as Haitian whenever the issue of race came up. Later I understood that he wanted us to dissociate ourselves from black Americans."[3]

In fact, it is partly because racist attitudes are generally *not* sensitive to these cultural and ethnic distinctions that an antiracist perspective divides groups up in a somewhat different way from a multicultural perspective. This point is made powerfully and tragically by the case of a Chinese-American, Vincent Chin, who was killed by a white autoworker resentful towards the Japanese because competition from the Japanese auto industry contributed to unemployment of American auto workers. The point suggested by a documentary film concerning this incident (*The Killing of Vincent Chin*) is not so much that the white killer mistook a Chinese-American for a Japanese-American, as that he had no clear sense that there was a difference between these two Asian-American groups. So racism's existence gives subordinate groups that are culturally distinct, common cause to identify and unite on a common racial basis in opposition to, for example, anti-Asian racism.

This difference between the antiracist and the multicultural perspectives applies to the categorization of dominant groups as well as to that of subordinate or vulnerable ones, in that the antiracist perspective ignores cultural differences within the dominant groups. Jewish-, Polish-, and Irish-Americans exemplify this. Irish-Americans, once viciously discriminated against by Anglo-Protestants in this country and viewed in derogatory terms similar to African-Americans, are no longer a victimized group; rather, Irish-Americans are now part of, are seen by nonwhite minorities as part of, and generally see themselves as part of the majority white group — a group which in fact perpetuates disadvantage and injustice to nonwhite groups.

Yet, despite the common racial designation as "white," Irish-Ameri-

cans are a culturally distinct group from Jewish-Americans and Polish-Americans; they have a distinct ancestor culture and historic ethnic experience, distinctive music, rituals, language, backgrounds, foods and the like. These deserve to be valued and appreciated by members of other ethnic groups, including nonwhite ethnic groups, as part of a multicultural program. Yet from a purely antiracist perspective Irish-Americans have no distinct group identity; they are just "whites." White students often object to being lumped together, as discussions of racism may do. The multicultural perspective is meant to speak to one legitimate source of this discomfort or protest. (Another is socioeconomic class, a large factor in this context, but unfortunately one beyond my scope here.) Whites aren't *just* whites; they too have ethnicities that are importaat sources of identity and that differentiate them from other whites. Nevertheless, the classification yielded by the lens of race — of Irish-Americans or Polish-Americans as "white" is not a *false* one; it is simply *partial*. Antiracism and multiculturalism constitute two distinct and complementary lenses, yielding different categorizations of a common social reality. Both lenses highlight a truth about that reality. *Antiracism*: the truth that groups are arranged in a hierarchy of dominance and subordination, security and vulnerability, advantage and disadvantage; *multiculturalism*: the truth that groups have distinct cultures.

The metaphor of antiracism and multiculturalism as complementary lenses on a complex reality should not mislead us as to the reality of race and ethnicity. The identities of both racial and ethnic cultural groups are not simply givens but are historical and social constructs. What people at a given time think of as distinct racial or ethnic groups is a product of social categorization both situationally determined and subject to change. Thus, southern and eastern European immigrant groups in this country in the early part of the twentieth century are now regarded unequivocally as white, but at that time were often seen as distinct races; they were thought by many to have racially based psychological characteristics, such as industry, irresponsibility, intelligence, and the like. To the extent that the notions of "white" and "black" were used, members of these immigrant groups did not always think of themselves as either one. Another example: in England the term "black" is currently used to refer to east Asians as well as to Afro-Caribbeans; in the United States only the latter are regarded as "black."

A third difference is that multiculturalism and antiracism involve distinct approaches to the study of a particular cultural group that has been a target of racism. While antiracism highlights victimization and resistance, multiculturalism highlights cultural life, cultural expression, achievements, and the like.

In particular the two perspectives yield distinct (though complementary) approaches to the study of the *contributions* of different groups. Multiculturalism's thrust is to highlight (especially hitherto neglected or undervalued) contributions. Yet merely highlighting contributions of different cultural groups does not, by itself, address the deficiencies in traditional education that the multicultural education movement (broadly construed) hopes to address. For one effect of racism has been to prevent subordinate groups from fully developing their capacities for such accomplishments and contributions. Indeed, what it means for a society to be characterized by systemic and institutional racism is precisely for it to place obstacles, on the basis of race, in the way of equal opportunity to develop precisely those capacities that allow a cultural group to make contributions both to their own people and to the wider society. Hence, the multicultural perspective is needed to highlight (often neglected or underappreciated) contributions of a group, while the antiracist perspective focuses on the racist obstacles in the path of that group's development toward (among other things) making such contributions.

A fourth difference between the antiracist and the multicultural perspectives lies in the basic values in which each is grounded and which guide the forms of education under each rubric. Antiracism is grounded in the idea of the equal dignity of all persons and of the consequent wrongness of any group dominating or suppressing any other. Equal dignity is a value rooted in a *sameness* among persons; a humanity *shared* by all persons. By contrast, multiculturalism is a value rooted in *differences* among persons; multiculturalism calls for a respect for cultures, not in spite of their differences from oneself, but precisely *for* those differences. Both of these values — of shared humanity, and of cultural difference — are essential; neither one encompasses the other. The strength of antiracism — in its grounding in individual dignity and shared humanity — is also the source of its limitation. While antiracism says that it is wrong for one group to dominate or persecute another because of race, it does not by itself involve a positive appreciation of ethnic groups as embodying distinct *cultures* which deserve to be valued. Common dignity can be affirmed without a positive valuing of the individual's culture in its concrete particularity. Multiculturalism involves the converse value limitation, for, while highlighting respect and appreciation for cultural difference, it does *not* focus on our common humanity or shared dignity. These two values are not inconsistent with one another; children can and need to learn both what they share with others as well as an appreciation of their differences.

A striking example of the difference between multiculturalism and antiracism regarding this valuational foundation can be found in a

comprehensive study of non-Jewish rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust, a book called *The Altruistic Personality*, by Samuel and Pearl Oliner.[4]

Most of the rescuers of Jews studied by the Oliners — people of various nationalities and occupations — expressed in some way an appreciation of the equal dignity of all persons and the irrelevance of race, nationality, and religion to that dignity. It was this acute appreciation of dignity, this strong antiracist consciousness, that provided an important part of their willingness to put themselves at great personal risk to rescue Jews during the Nazi occupation. However, only rarely did any rescuers show an appreciation of Jewishness as a cultural form having value in its own right. The rescuees were seen as having dignity *independent of*, and even *despite* their Jewishness. The Jewishness was not seen as a source of value, a value that was at risk in Hitler's attempt to exterminate Jewishness as well as Jews. The rescuers either lacked a general sense of multicultural value or failed to appreciate that value in the case of Jews. Similar points can be made about Turkish rescuers of Armenians during the Armenian genocide of 1915-16, according to research by Richard Hovanissian.

A final significant difference between the antiracist and the multicultural perspectives is that while antiracism directly challenges racial domination and racial injustice, multiculturalism, by contrast, poses no strong or pointed challenge to inequalities of power and opportunity between groups. Multiculturalism tends to promote the attitude of respect for other cultures, primarily within the existing structure and inequality between groups. While some multicultural education theorists, such as Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant, have argued that a fully realized program of multicultural education does challenge inequalities of power,[5] I think this point is better put by saying that a multicultural program needs to have a strong and central antiracist component, as well as a multicultural one in the sense I have outlined here.

I hope I have succeeded in showing both that antiracism and multiculturalism provide distinct perspectives and guiding values; that these perspectives are complementary; and that both are essential to a value education for a multiracial, multiethnic society.

The third value for an educational program that I want to discuss is the *sense of community* — specifically a sense of community that embraces racial and cultural differences. While the idea of a multiracial integrated community has historically been linked with the struggle against racism, I think there is reason for focusing on it as a value distinct from antiracism.

The sense of community that I mean involves a sense of bond with other persons, a sense of shared identification with the community in question (be it a class, a school or workplace), a sense of loyalty to and involvement with this community. I will make the further assumption that the experience of interracial community in such institutions is an important contributor to being able fully to experience members of other races and cultures as fellow citizens and fellow human beings throughout one's life.

It is true that the achievement of or the experience of interracial community is likely to contribute to a firm commitment to nonracist and antiracist values. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between the two families of values. A sense of community is defeated not only by racist attitudes, in which members of one group feel themselves superior to members of another group, but simply by experiencing members of other races and cultural groups as *other*, as distant from oneself, as people with whom one does not feel comfortable, and has little in common. As I suggested earlier, racial discomfort, racial sensitivity, and racial ignorance should be distinguished from racism itself; yet all of the former run contrary to a sense of interracial community. What defeats a sense of community is to see members of a group primarily as a *they*, as a kind of undifferentiated group counterposed to a *we*, defined by the group one identifies with oneself. One becomes blind to the individuality of members of the *they* group. One experiences this group as deeply different from oneself, even if one cannot always account for or explain that sense of difference. This anticommunal consciousness can exist in the absence of actual racist attitudes towards the other group, although the former is a natural stepping stone toward the latter. I think many students in schools, of all races and cultures, never do achieve the experience of interracial community, never learn to feel comfortable with members of other racial and ethnic groups, even though these students do not really have racist attitudes in the strict sense. Rather, the sense of group difference simply overwhelms any experiencing of commonality and sharing that is necessary for developing a sense of community.

Moreover, and unfortunately, despite the ways that antiracism and interracial community can be mutually supportive, there can also be tensions between certain aspects of antiracist education and the achievement of interracial community. On the most general level, antiracist education puts racial identity in the forefront of concern; one talks about groups — whites, blacks, Hispanics, etc. Yet, an overfocus on racial identity can give children a message that the most important thing about persons is their racial identity, and that people who differ from oneself racially necessarily differ in all kinds of other fundamental ways. It is

perhaps ironic that an antiracist perspective that affirms the shared humanity and equal dignity of all persons independent of race can sometimes contribute to this *we/they* consciousness. Nevertheless, this "racialization" of consciousness, to use Michael Omi and Howard Winant's term,[6] can contribute to a sense of distance and estrangement, or at least to a lack of comfort with members of other races. It can thereby harm the achievement of interracial community. This is not of course an argument against antiracist education, for, even if the two values were irrevocably in tension — and I will argue that they aren't — it might be interracial community that should be sacrificed to the more urgent task of antiracist education.

This tension presents a situation in which the tasks of value education might appear different to members of subordinate groups than of dominant groups, especially to parents in those different groups. African-American and other parents of color face the difficult task of teaching their children to be wary of and prepared for the racism that they will probably experience at some point, while yet not becoming so paranoid as to lump all whites together and to be entirely distrustful of them. I bring this point up partly because I think many white people fail to recognize, or don't take seriously enough, the pervasive and often subtle racism experienced by people of color, and incorrectly regard this self-protective attitude on their part as hypersensitivity. Because of their greater stake in countering racism, the ideal of interracial community might seem like a luxury to a subordinate group parent; nevertheless, I think it is a value that needs to have some place in their children's education as well.

Fortunately, we need not choose between the values of interracial community and antiracism; rather, we should search for ways of teaching antiracist values that minimize the potential for harming or preventing interracial community. I will briefly mention two general guidelines in this regard. One is constantly to emphasize the internal variety within a group being studied; not to say "whites" and "blacks" all the time as if these were monolithic groups. For example, in discussing slavery, make clear that not all blacks were slaves during the period of slavery, that there were many free blacks. Similarly, most whites did *not* own slaves, and a few whites even actively aligned themselves with the cause of abolition, aiding free blacks who organized the underground railroads and the like. Exhibiting such internal variety within "white," "black," and other groups helps to prevent the formation of rigid or undifferentiated images of racial groups that lend themselves readily to a *we/they* consciousness that undermines community.

A second guideline is to try to give students the experience (in

imagination at least) of being both discriminated against, excluded, or demeaned, and also being the discriminator, the excluder, the advantaged one. One first grade teacher I know discusses discrimination and racism by asking all the children in her class if they feel that they have been discriminated against in any way. Children feel discriminated against, excluded, or vulnerable to exclusion for all sorts of reasons — because they are short, or because they once didn't have a certain toy that other children had, or didn't know the characters of some television program being discussed. In one discussion in this teacher's class, a heavyish boy said that other kids made fun of him because of his size. In discussing this all the children were helped to see and to be sensitized in a personal, meaningful way to the damage done by all sorts of discrimination; and this is a lesson that this teacher extended to other forms of discrimination as well, including more socially significant ones, such as racism and sexism.

Encouraging students to attempt as much as possible to experience the vantage points of advantaged and disadvantaged, included and excluded, and the like, provides an important buffer to a "we/they" consciousness in the racial domain. This buffering is accomplished not so much by encouraging, as the first guideline does, the appreciation of internal diversity in a given group, as by bridging the gulf between the experience of the dominant and that of the subordinate. This is achieved by showing children that there is at least *some* dimension of life on which they occupy the dominant, and on others the subordinate, position (even if these dimensions are not of equal significance).

There is a similar process of potential convergence as well as potential tension between *community* and *multiculturalism*. These are distinct values. The positive bond and sense of connection involved in interracial community is not guaranteed by multiculturalism, which emphasizes *respect*, *interest*, and *understanding*; while such attitudes may help to inform and enrich a sense of community, they are quite compatible with its absence, and with a sense of distance from those of the respected, interesting "other culture." Some forms of multicultural education can even further divide students from one another while teaching respect, by *overemphasizing* cultural differences and mutual inaccessibility of different cultures to one another. Analogously to antiracism, this kind of faulty teaching of multiculturalism can lead to a similarly rigidified *we/they* consciousness.

The converse is true as well. Interracial community can not provide all the values involved in multiculturalism. For, while interracial community does encompass people who are culturally, racially, different from one another, it does not by itself promote a definite, positive

appreciation of cultural differences and of distinct cultural values. And a single-minded attempt to foster interracial community can lead easily to an avoidance of fully acknowledging these racial/cultural differences, for fear that such acknowledgment will foster a we/they attitude inimical to community.

Thus, interracial community and multiculturalism are distinct values that are both essential to a value education program, but that can be in tension with one another. Nevertheless, there are ways of teaching multiculturalism that minimize these tensions. Some broad guidelines ar the following: (a) Invite children's participation in cultures studied, so as to make "other" cultures as accessible as possible to nonmembers. For example, have children in the class interview one another, posing questions about each others' cultures that the questioners feel will help them to comprehend the culture in question. Establish an "intercultural dialogue" among students. This approach will use a recognition of genuine cultural differences to bring children together rather than keep them apart. (b) Recognize cultures' internal variety (even contradictory strands within a given culture), their change over time, and (where appropriate) their interaction with other cultures — rather than presenting cultures as frozen in time, monolithic, and totally self-contained. (c) Recognize cultural universals and commonalities. It is not contrary to the spirit of multiculturalism — to the acknowledgment of authentic cultural differences — to see that distinct cultures may share certain broad features. For example, every culture responds to certain universal features of human life, such as birth, death, the rearing of children, a search for meaning in life. Both (b) and (c) prevent an inaccurate and community-impairing "theyness" in the presentation of other cultures.

Finally, our conception of interracial community must itself allow for the recognition of difference. A powerful, but misleading, tradition in our thinking about community is that people only feel a sense of community when they think of themselves as "the same" as the other members of the community. On this view, recognition of difference is threatening to community. But, as Robert Bellah and his colleagues argue in *Habits of the Heart*, the kind of community needed in the United States is *pluralistic* community, one which involves a sense of bond and connection stemming from shared activity, condition, task, location, and the like — and grounded ultimately in an experience of shared humanity — yet recognizing and valuing cultural differences (and other kinds of differences as well).[7]

I have discussed three crucial educational values for a multiracial, multicultural society: opposition to racism, multiculturalism, and interracial community. I have argued that these are distinct values, and that

all three are essential to a responsible program of value education in a multicultural society. I have argued also that there can be tensions between different values. But the values can also be mutually supportive, and I have suggested some guidelines for maximizing the support and minimizing the tensions.

Notes

1. *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1988).

2. James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Dell, 1962).

3. Elaine Pinderhughes, *Understanding Race, Ethnicity, and Power: The Key to Efficacy in Clinical Practice* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

4. Samuel and Pearl Oliver, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

5. See among other writings, Carl Grant and Christine Sleeter, "An Analysis of Multicultural Education in the United States," *Harvard Educational Review* (Nov. 1987).

6. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960's to the 1980's* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

7. Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).